grayscale data which specifies a grayscale value other than the specific grayscale value, and supplying the converted grayscale data to said image output apparatus.

2.    (Amended) An image processing method according to claim 1, said converting further comprising a color reduction processing that reduces the number of levels which is indicatable by said input data into the number of levels which is indicatable by said grayscale data.

3.    (Amended) An image processing method according to claim 2, said color reduction processing being pseudo-halftone processing that distributes said grayscale data so that said grayscale data does not concentrate on the same value.

4.    (Amended) An image processing method according to claim 2, said color reduction processing converting all the input data corresponding to said specific grayscale value into grayscale data which specifies one of grayscale values adjacent to said specific grayscale value.

5.    (Amended) An image processing method comprising:

inputting data which indicates a grayscale of a pixel; and

converting said input data into grayscale data which specifies a grayscale of an image output apparatus by reducing the number of levels of said input data according to predetermined characteristics, and by performing pseudo-halftone processing that displays a halftone, in which, when said input data corresponds to a specific grayscale value which causes a defect in an output of said image output apparatus, at least part of said input data is converted into grayscale data which specifies one of grayscale values adjacent to said specific grayscale value, and supplying the converted data to said image output apparatus.

6.    (Amended) An image processing method according to claim 5, the step of converting said input data into said grayscale data further comprises:

performing first pseudo-halftone processing on said input data;

determining whether the data subjected to said first pseudo-halftone processing is

-2-

said specific grayscale value; and

outputting the data subjected to said first pseudo-halftone processing as the grayscale data when a result of said determination step is no, and of further performing second pseudo-halftone processing on the data subjected to said first pseudo-halftone processing when a result of said determination step is yes so as to convert the data into the grayscale data which specifies one of the grayscale values adjacent to said specific grayscale value.

7.    (Amended)  An image processing method according to claim 5, the step of converting said input data into said grayscale data further comprising:

performing first pseudo-halftone processing on said input data;

determining whether the data subjected to said first pseudo-halftone processing is said specific grayscale value and whether said input data is contained in part of a range corresponding to said specific grayscale value in said characteristics; and

outputting the data subjected to said first pseudo-halftone processing as the grayscale data while allowing an output of said specific grayscale value when a result of said determination step is no, and of further performing second pseudo-halftone processing on the data subjected to said first pseudo-halftone processing when a result of said determination step is yes so as to convert the data into the grayscale data which specifies one of the grayscale values adjacent to said specific grayscale value.

8.    (Amended)  An image processing method according to claim 5, the step of converting said input data into said grayscale data further comprising:

determining whether said input data is contained in a range which is to be converted into said specific grayscale value after performing first pseudo-halftone processing; and

performing said first pseudo-halftone processing on said input data when a result of said determination step is no so as to convert the data into the grayscale data, and of performing second pseudo-halftone processing on said input data when a result of said

-3-

determination step is yes so as to convert the data into the grayscale data which specifies one of the grayscale values adjacent to said specific grayscale value.

9.    (Amended)  An image processing method according to claim 5, the step of converting said input data into said grayscale data further comprising:

determining whether said input data is contained in part of a range which is to be converted into said specific grayscale value after performing first pseudo-halftone processing; and

performing said first pseudo-halftone processing on said input data when a result of said determination step is no so as to output the data as the grayscale data while allowing an output of said specific grayscale value, and of performing second pseudo-halftone processing on said input data when a result of said determination step is yes so as to convert the data into the grayscale data which specifies one of the grayscale values adjacent to said specific grayscale value.

10.    (Amended)  An image processing method according to claim 5, the step of converting said input data into said grayscale data further comprising:

converting said input data according to modified characteristics in such a manner that one of said characteristics out of a range corresponding to said specific grayscale value remains the same, and an inclination of said range is substantially halved, and the other characteristic out of said range maintains the continuity;

performing pseudo-halftone processing on the data converted by the modified characteristics; and

outputting the data, among the data subjected to said pseudo-halftone processing, smaller than said specific grayscale value as the grayscale data, and of shifting each grayscale value of the data greater than or equal to said specific grayscale value.

11.    (Amended)  An image processing method, comprising:

inputting data indicating a grayscale of a pixel;

selecting a dither value according to coordinates of said pixel from a predetermined dither matrix for pseudo-halftone processing, and adding the dither value to said input data;

reducing the data obtained by adding the dither value thereto to the number of levels which is indicatable by an image output apparatus;

determining whether the reduced data is a specific grayscale value which causes a defect in an output of said image output apparatus;

outputting the reduced data as is to said image output apparatus when a result of said determination is no; and

adding when a result of said determination is yes, said dither value and a value according to said color reduction to the reduced data so as to convert said input data into data which specifies one of grayscale values adjacent to said specific grayscale value according to the addition result and outputting the resulting data to the image output apparatus.

12.     (Amended)  An image processing method according to claim 11, the result of said determination being rendered to be yes only when the reduced data is said specific grayscale value, and when the grayscale of said input data is contained in a range corresponding to said specific grayscale value and is contained in a range narrower than the range corresponding to said specific grayscale value.

13.     (Amended)  An image processing method, comprising:

inputting data indicating a grayscale of a pixel;

determining whether said input data is contained in a range which is to be converted into a specific grayscale value which causes a defect in an output of an image output apparatus after a dither value is added to said input data, and after the number of levels of said input data is reduced to the number of levels which is indicatable by said image output apparatus;

when a result of said determination is no, adding the dither value to said input

-5-

data, and the number of levels of said input data is reduced to the number of levels which is indicatable by said image output apparatus, and outputting the resulting data to said image output apparatus; and

when a result of said determination is yes, adding a doubled value of said dither value and a value according to said color reduction to said input data so as to convert said input data into data which specifies one of grayscale values adjacent to said specific grayscale value according to the addition result, and outputting the resulting data to said image output apparatus.

14.    (Amended) An image processing method according to claim 13, the result of said determination being rendered to be yes only when said input data is contained in a range narrower than the range which is to be converted into the specific grayscale value which causes a defect in said image output apparatus.

15.    (Amended) An image processing method, comprising:

performing pre-processing on input data indicating a grayscale of a pixel;

performing pseudo-halftone processing on the data subjected to said pre-processing; and

performing post-processing on the data subjected to said pseudo-halftone processing, thereby reducing the number of levels of said input data into the number of levels which is indicatable by an image output apparatus;

said image processing method being characterized in that said pre-processing compresses a range from a center value corresponding to one of grayscale values adjacent to a specific grayscale value which causes a defect in an output of said image output apparatus to a center value corresponding to the other adjacent grayscale value into a range from the center value corresponding to one of the grayscale values adjacent to said specific grayscale value to a center value corresponding to said specific grayscale value, and

when the data subjected to said pseudo-halftone processing is said specific grayscale value, said post-processing shifts the grayscale value and then outputs the shifted

value.

16. (Amended) An image processing method, comprising:

performing pre-processing on input data indicating a grayscale of a pixel;

performing pseudo-halftone processing on the data subjected to said pre-processing; and

performing post-processing on the data subjected to said pseudo-halftone processing, thereby reducing the number of levels of said input data into the number of levels which is indicatable by an image output apparatus;

said image processing method being characterized in that said pre-processing compresses a range from a center value corresponding to one of grayscale values adjacent to a specific grayscale value which causes a defect in an output of said image output apparatus to a center value corresponding to the other adjacent grayscale value into a range from the center value corresponding to one of the grayscale values adjacent to said specific grayscale value to a center value corresponding to said specific grayscale value, and

when the grayscale value of said input data is contained in a range including the center value corresponding to said specific grayscale value, and when the data subjected to said pseudo-halftone processing is said specific grayscale value, said post-processing shifts the grayscale value and then outputs the shifted value.

17. (Amended) An image processing method, comprising:

performing pre-processing on input data indicating a grayscale of a pixel;

performing pseudo-halftone processing on the data subjected to said pre-processing; and

performing post-processing on the data subjected to said pseudo-halftone processing, thereby reducing the number of levels of said input data into the number of levels which is indicatable by an image output apparatus;

said image processing method being characterized in that said pre-processing

compresses a range including a center value corresponding to a specific grayscale value which causes a defect in an output of said image output apparatus into a range including a mean value of a center value corresponding to one of the grayscale values adjacent to said specific grayscale value and a center value corresponding to said specific grayscale value, and

when the grayscale value of said input data is contained in the range including the center value corresponding to said specific grayscale value, and when the data subjected to said pseudo-halftone processing is said specific grayscale value, said post-processing shifts the grayscale value and then outputs the shifted value.

18. (Amended) An image processing apparatus, comprising:

a conversion circuit that converts data indicating a grayscale of a pixel into grayscale data which specifies a grayscale of an image output apparatus according to predetermined characteristics, wherein, when said input data corresponds to a specific grayscale value which causes a defect in an output of said image output apparatus, said conversion circuit converts at least part of said input data into grayscale data which specifies a grayscale value other than the specific grayscale value, and supplies the converted grayscale data to said image output apparatus.

19. (Amended) An image processing apparatus, comprising:

a conversion circuit that converts data indicating a grayscale of a pixel into grayscale data which specifies a grayscale of an image output apparatus by reducing the number of levels of said input data according to predetermined characteristics, and by performing pseudo-halftone processing for displaying a halftone, wherein said conversion circuit converts at least part of the data corresponding to a specific grayscale value which causes a defect in an output of said image output apparatus into grayscale data which specifies one of grayscale values adjacent to said specific grayscale value, and supplies the converted data to said image output apparatus.

20. (Amended) An electronic device, comprising:

an image processing apparatus and an image output apparatus,

said image processing apparatus converting data indicating a grayscale of a pixel into grayscale data which specifies a grayscale of said image output apparatus by reducing the number of levels of said input data according to predetermined characteristics and by performing pseudo-halftone processing for displaying a halftone,

said image processing apparatus comprising a conversion circuit that converts at least part of the input data corresponding to a specific grayscale value which causes a defect in an output of said image output apparatus into the grayscale data which specifies one of grayscale values adjacent to said specific grayscale value, and said image forming apparatus outputting an image according to the grayscale data converted by said image processing apparatus.

21.    (Amended)  An image processing program which causes a computer that supplies grayscale data which specifies a grayscale of an image output apparatus to said image output apparatus to function as device that indicates a grayscale of a pixel into said grayscale data by reducing the number of levels of the input data according to predetermined characteristics and by performing pseudo-halftone processing for displaying a halftone, wherein the device converts at least part of the data corresponding to a specific grayscale value which causes a defect in an output of said image output apparatus into the grayscale data which specifies one of grayscale values adjacent to said specific grayscale value, and supplies the converted grayscale data to said image output apparatus.

22.    (Amended)  A computer-readable recording medium on which an image processing program is recorded, said image processing program causing a computer for supplying grayscale data which specifies a grayscale of an image output apparatus to said image output apparatus to function as device that indicates a grayscale of a pixel into said grayscale data by reducing the number of levels of the input data according to predetermined characteristics and by performing pseudo-halftone processing for displaying a halftone, wherein the device converts at least part of the data corresponding to a specific grayscale value which